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In a three-year study to determine the effectiveness of additional counseling and guidance in aiding realistic educational and occupational choice by junior high school students, the 721 members of the seventh-grade classes of three Muskegon junior-high schools were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. The Ohio Student Inventory of Guidance Awareness, Stanford Achievement Test Battery, Illinois Inventory of Parent Opinion, and Science Research Associates' Youth Inventory, and data on failures, honor rolls, disciplinary actions, and dropouts were used to compare results. Experimental students received both home visits by counselors and group counseling. No statistical difference was found between experimental and control groups in numbers of students receiving failing grades, being on the honor roll, or dropping from school. Experimental group students were reported for disciplinary action at a significantly higher rate in both the seventh and ninth grades. Experimental group students received higher grades, showed increased interest in educational and vocational planning, and developed more awareness of the need for early economic planning. It was not evident that families increased planning for future educational and vocational goals or consciously created an environment conducive to optimum development. (JM)

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# A REPORT OF

# THE MUSKEGON GUIDANCE PROJECT

# THE EFFECT OF ADDITIONAL COUNSELING ON THE ABLE STUDENT'S VOCATIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

*Conducted by*

THE GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING SERVICE OF THE
MUSKEGON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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# I. INTRODUCTION

This is a brief of the report of a demonstration project conducted by the Muskegon Public Schools under the provisions of the Michigan State Plan for Guidance, Counseling and Testing, Bulletin No. NDEA 502-63, Section 5.8, and the NDEA of 1958, Section 143.26, P.L. 85-864.

The project entitled, "The Effect of Additional Counseling on the Able Student's Vocational and Educational Planning," commenced on April 1, 1962, and terminated on June 30, 1965.

The full development of the potential of able students, defined for this project as having "the capacity to produce acceptable work in the regular school program," depends on setting and attaining educational and vocational goals that might be termed realistic. Many potentially able students produce inferior work, make unrealistic curriculum and career choices, and too often drop out of school as a result of unrealistic goals and inappropriate educational programming.

Unrealistic goals and inappropriate programming result from factors that have their origin in parental fears, hopes and desires which are often in conflict with the ambitions of a child; in the lack of parental understanding of the child's abilities and of the school experiences which might develop them; in guidance and counseling procedures limited too often to the school day, the school year, the school building, or to the child, without regard for family relationships and circumstances; in inadequate orientation of students to school services, curriculum offerings and requirements, especially at the transition point between unit levels (elementary to junior high and junior high to senior high).

# II. PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

The purpose of the project was to provide an expanded program of counseling and guidance, reaching students more often on a carefully planned basis, reaching parents under non-stressful circumstances during the early planning years, and aiming at more realistic educational and vocational planning. Better understanding of the able student's problems, fuller development of his potential, closer home-school partnerships, more judicious placement in the world of work, and a richer citizenship were the hoped for results.

# III. THE OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

This study assumed that expanded educational, vocational and personal counseling and guidance would increase the realism of educational and vocational decisions. To measure the realistic quality of these decisions, hypotheses were constructed which reflected the behavior of students in areas where these decisions would affect their performance: school achievement, discipline, retention, curricular choices, family planning for high school and post-high school training, and family interest.

It was hypothesized that, with an expanded counseling and guidance program, the following goals would be attained:

1. Fewer names would appear on periodic failure lists.
2. More names would appear on the honor roll.
3. Fewer people would be reported for discipline.
4. Fewer students would show desire to drop-out.
5. More students would show increased interest in vocational and educational planning.
6. More consistent achievement would be evident in the transition area as measured by recorded achievement.
7. Increased economic planning by families for future educational and vocational goals would occur.
8. There would be an awareness on the part of parents of the need for early economic planning to meet future vocational and educational goals.
9. Parents would be helped to provide an environment conducive to optimum development.

Individual achievement toward each of the goals was measured at regular intervals and progress reports prepared. The faculty members of the schools involved were encouraged to make comments and suggestions on any favorable or unfavorable changes brought about by this expanded counseling and guidance program.

Consultants were employed to assist when needed throughout the demonstration project to provide in-service training for counselors and instructional staff in the areas of parent interviewing, home visitations, case conferences, understanding of socio-economic backgrounds, program evaluation, etc.

The evaluation phase ran concurrently with the demonstration phase and culminated at the end of the demonstration period. There were four specific test instruments used for the project, each of them selected to yield data for testing the goals of the study: *The Ohio Student Inventory of Guidance Awareness*, the *Stanford Achievement Test Battery*, the *Illinois Inventory of Parent Opinion*, and *Science Research Associates' Youth Inventory*. In addition, interviews with selected members of the experimental group and their parents were held to obtain a sampling of both parental and student perceptions of changes that might have resulted from their experiences during the project. Tests given routinely to all students were used by counselors as special aids in working with the experimental group. To these data were added lists of failing students and the number of subjects failed, honor roll lists, names of those reported for disciplinary action, the number of times each was reported, and lists of those involved in the project who dropped out of school.

It was planned to follow project students through the high school program to determine the effectiveness of the expanded service in helping to make realistic subject and career choices.

## IV. PROCEDURE

Students for this project were selected from the entering seventh grade students of the three junior high schools of the district as shown on the June, 1962, promotion reports from the feeder elementary schools. These reports showed a total population of 721 students. An alphabetical list of able students was compiled and numbered. Then, from a table of random numbers, the students were divided into two groups, one experimental and the other control.

Identification of able students was made after careful analysis of marks, standardized achievement ratings, intelligence test scores and personal questionaires, and was accomplished between April 1 and June 30, 1962.

In addition to the selection of students, the preparation phase of the project included an early orientation of seventh graders in the experimental group, their parents and teachers, to the nature of the project. This was accomplished by means of group meetings and personal encounters involving counselor-students and counselor-parents.

The demonstration phase began two weeks before the commencement of the 1962 fall term and continued for three years.

Home visitations by counselors were made during the summer months each year of the project, offering more productive opportunities for parental counseling and involvement as it might affect the child's well-being, and for parental enlightenment with respect to the child's abilities and the school program. Such visitations were scheduled at times most convenient to the parents. A booklet, *Planning for Our World of Work*, was developed and distributed during the home visits prior to the students' entering the ninth grade (August, 1964.)

Table I. A summary of test administration to both experimental and control groups, September, 1962, to June, 1965.

| YEAR | 1962-63 | | 1963-64 | | 1964-65 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| TEST | FALL | SPRING | FALL | SPRING | FALL | SPRING |
| Otis Quick Scoring Mental Ability | X | | | | X | |
| SRA Youth Inventory | X | | | | | X |
| Iowa Silent Reading | X | X | | | | |
| Stanford Achievement | | X | | X | | X |
| Ohio Guidance Awareness | | | | | | X |
| Illinois Parental Opinion | | | | | | X |

# V. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

This project was undertaken in order to test whether an expanded counseling and guidance program with both parents and students would result in more realistic educational and vocational choices for able students. To evaluate its effectiveness, nine hypotheses were constructed against which data were tested and analyzed. These were expressed in null form, as follows:

(Ho 1.) There will be no significant difference between the number of students in the experimental group who will receive failing grades and the number of those in the control group who receive failing grades.

(Ho 2.) There will be no significant difference between the number of students in the experimental group whose names appear on the honor roll and the number in the control group whose names appear on the honor roll.

(Ho 3.) There will be no significant difference between the number of students in the experimental group who are reported for disciplinary action and the number in the control group who are reported for disciplinary action.

(Ho 4.) There will be no significant difference between the number of students in the experimental group who drop out of school and the number of students in the control group who drop out of school.

(Ho 5.) There will be no significant difference between the consistency of achievement of the students in the experimental group in the transition period from elementary to senior high school education and the consistency of achievement of the students in the control group during this same period.

Additionally, to evaluate the realistic quality of educational and vocational decisions it was hypothesized that:

(Ho 6.) Students in the experimental group will show increased interest in educational and vocational planning.

(Ho 7.) Families of students in the experimental group will be more aware of the need for early economic planning to meet future educational and vocational goals.

(Ho 8.) Families of students in the experimental group will increase their economic planning for future educational and vocational goals.

(Ho 9.) Families of students in the experimental group will provide an environment more conducive to optimum development.

Certain conclusions were reached.

With respect to Hypotheses 1 and 2, where the Chi Square test of significance was applied to these data to determine if there were statistically significant differences between the experimental and control groups, the differences proved to have no significance in any of the three schools.

The same test of significance applied to Hypothesis 3 yielded a significant difference between the groups in both the seventh and eighth grades---significant at the ten per cent level of confidence in the seventh grade and at the twenty per cent level of confidence in the eighth grade. No significant difference was found in data for the ninth grade students. An inspection of the data revealed that the number of discipline cases among the experimental group at all three levels was greater than for the control group, although the level of significance was very low.

The total number of drop-outs (15) in both groups was too small to lend itself to statistical analysis, although twice as many dropped out of the control group as out of the experimental group.

The class grades of the two groups were found to be significantly different in grades seven and nine--at the five percent level in the seventh grade and at the one percent level for the ninth grade. A summary of all class grades for all grade levels revealed that the experimental group had statistically significantly higher grades than did the control group.

Student interest in educational and vocational planning, as measured by the *Ohio Inventory of Guidance Awareness*, was greater on the part of the experimental group. Of the thirty three questions on the Inventory, fifteen differentiated significantly at the ten percent level or better, seven at the one percent level and one at the two percent level. Additional evidence, gained from the evaluation interviews held with members of the experimental group, yielded clues as to the increased interest on the part of this group.

In the area of economic planning for future educational and vocational goals, interviews with parents and volunteered responses to the *Illinois Inventory of Parent Opinion* revealed the recognition of the need for economic planning for the future. However, responses did not indicate significant increases in this planning as a result of the project.

The final hypothesis dealt with the environment parents might provide for the development of their children. In general, there was little concrete evidence of the parents consciously creating an environment conducive to optimum development.

In summary, this study showed that additional counseling and guidance for able junior high students resulted in significantly higher grades, increased student interest in educational and vocational plan-

ning, and increased parental awareness of the need for early economic planning to implement future educational and vocational decisions. The significant improvement of grades in the experimental group may well have been the single, most important result of the project.

## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this demonstration project indicated the desirability of continuation of the additional counseling and guidance services for all junior high school students.

Home visitations by counselors during the summer vacations appear to offer more than limited usefulness as a remedy for misunderstanding between home and school, and are therefore recommended as being operationally essential.

Counselors from the junior high schools felt the need to articulate their programs more closely with elementary schools serving as feeder schools to their particular buildings and would recommend the adoption of this practice as a regular procedure.

Continuous follow-up through high school of the project groups to further test the hypotheses and to provide long-term evaluation of the results was advocated.

An increased use of small group counseling techniques with students and parents dealing with specific problems appear to have considerable promise.

Finally, further inquiry should be directed toward confirming evidence of better public relations and more friendly rapport with families often hostile to school, and of increased participation in school activities by minority groups, as a result of this expanded guidance and counseling program.

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